

HONORING SERGEANT MAJOR
RICHARD "ROCKY" HERNANDEZ,
SR., U.S. ARMY, RETIRED

HON. JOHN R. CARTER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 21, 2015

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Sergeant Major Richard "Rocky" Hernandez, Sr., U.S. Army, Retired. As a man who has lived his life in the service of his country and fellow man, it brings me great pride as a Texan to highlight the life of this public servant who has inspired many to pay the good will forward. SGM Hernandez selflessly served with distinction throughout his life in the military, the School District of Killeen, and the volunteer service that brought much needed help to retired veterans.

SGM Hernandez was born in Corpus Christi, Texas in March 1946. Heeding the call to service, SGM Hernandez departed high school early and enlisted in the U.S. Army in May, 1963. During his U.S. Army career he served over 14 years in Germany, deployed for one tour in Korea, and served two tours in Vietnam. While in Vietnam SGM Hernandez was assigned to the 196th Infantry Brigade, 23rd Infantry Division. SGM Hernandez was wounded in action on March 23, 1969 by enemy mortar fire and was awarded the Purple Heart Medal.

After achieving the rank of Sergeant Major, Rocky medically retired in 1989 having been disabled through peacetime and wartime injuries sustained in the service of his country. Nevertheless, SGM Hernandez would not be kept down for long. Following his military retirement SGM Hernandez served another 20 years for the Killeen Independent School District.

Yet still the call to serve and desire to help others burned inside. After joining a local Veterans Organization and hearing the voices of veterans seeking help, SGM Hernandez felt inspired to help his fellow veterans and their families navigate the complex VA system. In 1994 SGM Hernandez became a volunteer Veterans Service Officer. Since that time, SGM Hernandez has helped hundreds of veterans gain their well-deserved benefits. Today SGM Hernandez serves as Citizen on Patrol, where he continues his service with his eyes and ears to fight crime and evil wherever it resides.

After serving two full careers, SGM Hernandez exemplifies what it means to be an American and a Texan. May we follow the examples of great men such as SGM Hernandez and live our lives in the service of our fellow men and country. I join SGM Hernandez's family and friends in wishing him nothing but the best in the years ahead.

KNOW THE CBRN TERRORISM
THREATS TO TRANSPORTATION
ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3350, the

"Know the CBRN Terrorism Threats to Transportation Act," which requires the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis to conduct a terrorism threat assessment regarding the ground transportation of chemical, biological, nuclear, and radiological (CBRN) materials.

As a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee and the Ranking Member of the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations, I appreciate the significance of this bill.

On September 11, 2001, 2,977 people were killed after terrorists hijacked four commercial aircraft and used three of them as guided missiles to destroy much of the complex that made up the New York City Twin Towers as well as a wing of the Pentagon.

The fourth plane was crashed into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania as passengers heroically attempted to retake the plane from the control of hijackers.

Since September 11, 2001, security experts have warned of vulnerabilities that exist should terrorists plan to attack a chemical facility located within the United States or worse yet, gain unlawful access to a facility, pipelines, or transit routes and steal chemicals for a mass attack against civilians.

Transportation of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) materials across our borders and within the United States may become targets for terrorists who seek to do us harm.

The 18th Congressional District of Texas, which I serve, is home to some of the world's largest petrochemical producers, which employ thousands of Houston area residents.

Chemicals are a vital and common presence in the lives of our nation's citizens, but we often forget how dangerous they can be under the wrong conditions.

On April 17, 2013, the small town of West, Texas felt the power and destructive force of ammonium nitrate when an accidental fire ignited what is believed to have been between 140 to 160 tons of the chemical.

This was no terrorist attack, but a very tragic accident.

The accident in the town of West, Texas reminded all of us who represent districts that count chemical plants or their owners and operators as constituents—how important it is to protect the transport of these products from theft or misuse by terrorists.

Ports, railways, pipelines, and trucks are critical to the domestic transport of chemical products.

U.S. seaports, like the Port of Houston, are vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

Ports serve as America's gateway to the global economy since the nation's economic prosperity rests on the ability of containerized and bulk cargo arriving unimpeded at U.S. ports to support the rapid delivery system that underpins the manufacturing and retail sectors.

A central component of national security is the ability of our international ports to move goods into and out of the country.

According to the Department of Commerce in 2012, Texas exports totaled \$265 billion.

The Port of Houston is a 25-mile-long complex of diversified public and private facilities located just a few hours' sailing time from the Gulf of Mexico.

In 2012, ship channel-related businesses contributed 1,026,820 jobs and generated

more than \$178.5 billion in statewide economic activity.

In 2014, the Port of Houston was ranked among U.S. ports:

1. 1st in foreign tonnage;
2. 1st among Texas ports with 46% of market share by tonnage and 95% market share in containers by total TEUS in 2014;
3. 1st among Gulf Coast container ports, handling 67% of U.S. Gulf Coast container traffic in 2014; and
4. 2nd in U.S. port in terms of total foreign cargo value (based on U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Census)

The Government Accountability Office (GAO), reports that the Port of Houston and its waterways and vessels, are part of an economic engine handling more than \$700 billion in cargo annually.

The Port of Houston houses approximately 100 steamship lines offering services that link Houston with 1,053 ports in 203 countries.

The Port of Houston is home to a \$15 billion petrochemical complex, the largest in the nation and second largest in the world.

With the nation's largest petrochemical complex supplying over 40 percent of the nation's base petrochemical manufacturing capacity, what happens at the Port of Houston affects the entire nation.

In 2004, nearly 155 million tons of chemicals were transported by rail in North America, which constitutes 1.75 million rail cars of hazardous materials.

The volume of hazardous materials moving by rail more than doubled since 1980 indicates that rail has become an integral part of the tremendous increase in the transport of hazardous materials.

According to the Texas Department of Transportation approximately 2,200 trains per week travel within the Houston regional rail network, which is comprised of more than 800 miles of mainline tracks and 21 miles of railroad bridges.

I support this bill because we must protect the American people against potential terrorism through the unconventional use of biological, chemical or radiological materials that have a beneficial commercial or industrial purpose.

Without the proper precautions and security measures major U.S. cities such as Houston, Texas may be vulnerable to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear attacks by terrorist.

H.R. 3350 addresses many problems by requiring the Secretary of Homeland Security to conduct a terrorism threat assessment of the transportation of chemical, biological, nuclear, and radiological materials through the United States land borders and within the United States.

In order to enforce the required threat assessment the Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis shall consult with the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration, the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border protection, and the heads of other Federal departments and agencies, as deemed appropriate to ensure that such terrorism threat assessment is informed by current information about homeland security threats.

Congress must take forward action as threats of chemical and biological terrorism rise and terrorist groups actively seeking hazardous chemicals in order to inflict harm against American citizens.